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Subject: ST. LOUIS PUBLIC RADIO: EPA To Contract With Army Corps To Build Fire Break At Bridgeton Landfill

EPA To Contract With Army Corps To Build Fire Break At Bridgeton Landfill

By [Véronique LaCapra](#)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says it is contracting with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build a fire break to keep an underground fire from reaching radioactive waste at the landfill complex in Bridgeton.

[The announcement](#) by EPA Regional Administrator Karl Brooks comes in response to [a letter](#) he received on Tuesday from Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster.

Brooks said the public can expect to see construction of the fire break to begin within 90 days. More information about the arrangement with the Corps would be released to the public next week.

In the meantime, the EPA is continuing tests to determine the extent of the radioactive waste along the border between the Bridgeton Landfill -- where the underground fire is located -- and the West Lake Landfill -- where the radioactive waste was thought to be contained.

Recent tests have found radioactivity outside of the chain link perimeter fence at West Lake, which was supposed to keep landfill workers and the public from accessing the area. That means there is radioactive waste inside the the north quarry of the Bridgeton Landfill, closer to the underground fire than previously thought. Brooks could not immediately say how close. Previous estimates have put that distance at about 1,000 feet.

Brooks said that although the EPA plans to continue to work with the Corps at West Lake, the ultimate decision about what to do with the radioactive material would remain with the EPA. Environmental groups, area residents and, more recently, [elected officials](#) -- including U.S. Senators Roy Blunt and Claire McCaskill -- have been lobbying for the Corps to take over the radioactive clean-up at West Lake.

Brooks could not say when the EPA would make its final decision about whether to leave the radioactive material at West Lake or move it elsewhere.

However, he said his agency would be responsible for any radioactive material found at either the West Lake or Bridgeton Landfills. He also said the EPA would continue to work with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to keep both landfill workers and area residents safe.

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